NATURENOTES

VOL I NO 8 APRIL 1965

NATURE NOTES

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"NATURE NOTES"

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THE THAMES SCIENCE CENTER , INC.

Director & Editor : Roy A. Kennan

It is the purpose of this monthly bulletin, sent free of charge to all members of the Thames Science Center, to report on activities at the Center both in the month just past and in the months to come, to welcome new members to the organization, and to offer informational articles in the field of Natural Science.

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(By Don-Paul Sommerfeld, former T.S.C. Director, republished here.)
Cover by Mrs. Steinhilber.....see Ed. Note pg.6

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A WINTER WALK WITH MY CHILD
by R. E. Cork

She watches the river round a bend,
Swiftly moving, absorbing the snow.
She's laughing at the calm bayou,
Covered by a sheet of ice,
A playground for the blowing wind and snow.

Mallards are nestled among the reeds,
Lonely and black against the snow,
as still as decoys, but she knows
that feathers harbor vibrant life,
shivering from the blowing wind and snow.

The black barren trees and darkened skies
illuminated by the snow,
but warmest, brightest, is the glow
from my daughter's sparkling eyes,
enchanted by the blowing wind and snow.

(Ed. Note : Although this is a Winter poem and the season is Spring, I thought it might be nice to remember the cold times. Mr. Cork is a salesman who came to sell, returned as a friend, and is now a contributor to Nature Notes.)

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
April 1965

Hello There!

Spring is here! As Don-Paul Sommerfeld said in his Spring NATURE NOTE, reprinted in this issue, we all have our own ways of being sure that it REALLY is Spring...Well, for me it has been the peeping of the Spring Peeper (Hyla crucifer) as long as I can remember. This year I've had to add the Wood Frog's song to my list of Spring sounds. I was up at Gillette Castle in Hadlyme on April 4th and there saw dozens of Wood Frogs in the picnic area pond. My children at first thought they heard ducks in the pond and were quite surprised to find out who was making all that noise!

Looking at last month's calendar I see that Mrs. Kashanski's field trip was its usual success, and I'm happy to say that this time the P.S.W.S.-T.S.C. Family Field Trip on April 11 was also successful. Now let's ALL show up for the May 16 trip at the Conn. College Arboretum! The trails are wide, there's plenty of woods, and there should be enough different warblers to keep us all busy...

Although the Marine Borer Exhibit loaned us by Clapp Labs. was extensive and the Navy film very good, I'm sorry to say that very few came to see it. I guess it's time to get out of doors now and minimize indoor activities...(After this next school vacation week, please.)

Our exhibit at the Lions' Flower Show was well received, and it's comforting to know that about 14,000 people got a chance to see a little of what the Center has to offer. Next year bigger and better...

Harry Gault came over from Groton last Sunday and did a beautiful job of aquascaping a tank for us...too bad some of you didn't come and learn how...

I'm afraid it's not too easy to be pessimistic when the sun is shining and it's getting warmer every day...we have scheduled things for April 27 thru May 1 for school vacation time, and I expect to see a full room for each lecture... after all, we'll have zoo animals, live game fish, and beautiful flower pictures. And for outdoor program who can top lunch served by an Indian Princess?...I even expect to have lots of company on my trip to Harkness Beach! (Now...it's up to YOU to make my prophecies come true...)

I promised you more about our Summer Program in Nature Notes. We don't have specific times and dates yet, by how do courses that meet in bathing suits and old clothes sound?...How does "school" that meets outdoors, rain or shine, sound?...And how about if we again provide books, notebooks, etc., etc?...There'll be more information coming, so keep your eyes open and your ears tuned in...

Meanwhile, look over the Activities Calendar carefully, and don't forget to turn over to the P.S.W.S. page, because between us there are eight field trips and four lectures in one month...

Roy A. Kennan

ACTIVITIES CALENDAR - APRIL - MAY 1965

18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22

Course

Beginning Oceanography...this successful course will meet on the 24th of April at the Center, and will end with a field trip to the U.Conn. lab at Noank on May 1st..both sections, 10 A.M. for the field trip...

Lectures

April 27, 8 P.M. at the Center
SPRING FLOWERS, a color slide lecture by Mr. William Cannon of the Avon Greenhouses, Avon, Mass. Mr. Cannon is a commercial floriculturist, graduate of the University of Mass., and an accomplished photographer and lecturer. This talk will deal with both cultivated and wildflowers of all types.

April 28, 10 A.M. at the Center
Mr. Herbert Moran, Director of Recreation for New London, has been re-scheduled to bring some animals from the Bates Woods Nature Center zoo to visit us. Many people were disappointed when Mr. Moran got the flu and couldn't come last time, so come early to get a seat...

April 29, 10 A.M. at the Center
Mr. David Green, Fisheries Biologist for the State of Conn., is going to visit us and show us some of the fish currently being raised by the State for release in ponds and streams. Here's a chance to see what you'll be fishing for before you buy the license...

Field Trips

April 27, 9:45 A.M. start from the Center
This trip will be by auto to the Tomaquag Indian Memorial Museum in Ashaway, Rhode Island, where we'll tour the museum and the grounds and will be served an Indian luncheon by an Indian princess! The fee for this trip will be 50¢ to cover the cost of the luncheon. The trip will be open to fifteen 3rd, 4th and 5th graders, and we're asking for telephoned reservations by the 25th, please...

April 30, 10 A.M. start from the Center
This trip will be conducted by the Director to the beach at Harkness Park. This is a bird watchers' paradise, but we'll concentrate on life found between the tides. Wear shoes that can stand getting wet...The trip will be open to all, but we'd like telephoned reservations so as to plan for drivers.

P.S.W.S. Field Trips during April & May

As one facet of the Trial Merger, we are publishing here the Spring schedule of the Santuary's field trips. T.S.C. members are all invited to go on these trips, and there is no charge for any of them. They are all primarily birding trips, but all facets of Nature are discussed as they reveal themselves along the trail. If you have binoculars or a spotting scope be sure to bring them...

Spring Field Trips...Saturday Mornings

April 24, Bluff Point, 7 A.M.
Meet at P.S.W.S. at 6:30 A.M. or at the Groton Town Hall in Poquonnock Bridge at 7 A.M. Special leader for this trip will be Mr. Walter J. Moran.

May 1, Napatree Point, 7 A.M.
Meet at P.S.W.S. at 6:30 A.M. or at the Watch Hill Yacht Club parking lot at 7 A.M. This is a long beach walk and is apt to be cold, so dress accordingly. Many shore birds, plus almost anything else...

May 8, Home of Mr. & Mrs. Frank Eastman, Ledyard, 7 A.M.
Meet at P.S.W.S. at 6:30 A.M. or at the Eastmans' on Shewville Road in Ledyard at 7 A.M. The Eastmans band birds and have plantings on their property designed to attract birds. This visit will be conducted by the Eastmans...

May 15, Lake-of-Isles Scout Reservation, 7 A.M.
Meet at P.S.W.S. at 6:30 A.M. or at the Scout Reservation at 7 A.M. This trip should turn up warblers, woodland birds, etc...

May 22, Pachaug State Forest, Voluntown, 7 A.M.
Meet at P.S.W.S. at 6:15 A.M. or in front of the Voluntown postoffice at 7 A.M. This is a woodland trip and we'll see pitcher plants and sundews as well as birds...

P.S.W.S. - T.S.C. Sunday Family Field Trips

May 16, Conn. College Arboretum, 10 A.M.
This is another in the series of combined trips for member families of both organizations that started last Fall. We should see many warblers on their Spring migration route...

P.S.W.S. Trailside Lecture

April 21, at P.S.W.S., 8 P.M.
A GULL'S WAY by Lois and Louis Darling... A talk on the life and behavior of the Herring Gull, illustrated in color. Material for this talk is taken from the Darlings' new book of the same title, being published this Spring by Wm. Morrow and Co. In the course of studies for this book Mr. Darling spent a month alone on a coastal island and was joined by Mrs. Darling for two more weeks. They were the only mammals except seals frequenting the island. The Darlings are nationally known naturalists, co-authors and co-illustrators.

In consideration of the Trial Merger, T.S.C. members are invited to this lecture free of charge. The charge for non-members is $1.00.

NATURE NOTE - APRIL 1965

SPRING

by

Don-Paul Sommerfeld - former Director,
Thames Science Center

We all have our own ways of recognizing the arrival of Spring. For the majority of us it is the sight of the first Robin. For some teachers and young boys it is the appearance of Skunk Cabbage. For many woodland trampers it is the sight of the first gray Pussy Willows. Others, like this writer, are reluctant to hail Spring until the Red Maples in the wetlands begin to bloom, making patterns of red against the silvery bark and deep blue skies. While the Red Maple shows that Spring is really here and not just an unseasonable warm spell before the next snow, the biggest thrill of the season is to hear the song of the Wood Thrush after a long Winter.

We thought that some of our readers might be interested in the approximate dates for some of the birds in this area. As you may know, the male birds of a given species generally return from their southern vacation first. This allows them to stake out nesting territory without females around to distract them , a very neat arrangement indeed. The Red-winged Blackbirds are a typical example of this. The males arrive around the last week in February and begin singing about the second week in March. Robins are usually seen from the middle of March on. However, the first Robins we see are only migrants passing through on their way further North. Our nesting Robins arrive later on and are neither as large or as colorful as the Laborador (Newfoundland) Robins.

The clown of the feathered world also arrives in March. You may know him as the Woodcock or the Timberdoodle. This bird has a most interesting mating song and dance routine. Woodcocks will sing in the evenings during early warm spells, but a cold snap will shut them up again. They are most readily found about dusk in an open wetland feeding on angleworms or singing. The male Woodcock walks around in circles making a "beank" sound. After about six or eight "beanks" he flies up in a spiral, making a whistling sound as the air passes through his wing feathers. After 30 to 90 seconds he comes fluttering down in a spiral flight pattern making a chirping sound that sounds like an airplane with a damaged propeller. If you are interested in going out to listen for Woodcocks you will find them at their best in May.

The Wood Thrush should be heard by the first week in May. It is easiest to track down the song of one early in the morning, but they are also commonly heard at dusk.

Most birders eagerly await the passing of the great flocks of warblers on their way further North. While they are among the smallest birds, they are also among the most colorful. This migration occurs locally between May 14th to 28th, the largest flocks passing through the 18th to 24th.

And while we're still on birding, many people want to know when the high point of the season comes. (If you're getting out of bed early you want to be sure something is out singing.) The experts have picked the third week in May for the following reasons :

(1) The Southern birds have all arrived; (2) Most of the birds are staking out territory, which means singing; (3) The early birds (pardon the expression) and Winter residents are still singing; and (4) The warblers are passing through the area.

April Blooming Schedule

First week : Willow, Aspen, Cottonwood and Elm trees usually begin to flower. The Skunk Cabbage has been in bloom for several weeks now and many of the Crocus have finished blooming. Chickweed is flowering in poorly weeded gardens with a warm microclimate. It is easily recognized by its tiny white 5-petalled flowers. Shepherdspurse is found in open woods and poor lawns; similar in size to the Chickweed, its flowers have 4 white petals. Pennsylvania Sedge is a grass-like plant of open woodlands which has a yellow spike of flowers on a 2 to 4 inch stem. Sedges are easily recognized by their triangular stems : grass stems are usually round in corss-section.

Second week : The Red Maples are beginning to flower. Take time to examine them closely. The Pussy Willows have changed ; males have become yellow with pollen and females are now green.

Third week : Forsythia should be in bloom. Many people have had it blooming in the house since early March. Spicebush, a native shrub of wetlands, has a small yellow, spicy-smelling blossom. Aspen catkins should be fully elongated.

Fourth week : The Norway Maple is an introduced shade tree found on many of the streets of New London. Flowers come out before the leaves, giving the tree a yellow-green color. All the Cherries (Pin, Choke & Black) come into bloom about this time, as well as the Magnolia, Shadbush or Serviceberry, Wild Azalea and Highbush Blueberry. Marsh Marigold usually appears before May. Some years Trailing Arbutus is in bloom at this time. The pale pink to white flowers often bloom under a blanket of dry Oak leaves. Their sweet fragrance often helps one to locate the flowers among the leathery, hairy leaves. Wild Ginger, Trillium and Bloodroot can also be found by the observant hiker.

Unseasonable weather can either retard or hasten the flowering of the plants listed, but the order still follows.

(Ed. Note : As you must have noticed, the cover of each issue of Nature Notes is tied in with the NATURE NOTE itself. This month is no exception, but it has the added flavor of my favorite subject...volunteer! The cover was done by Mrs. Elaine Steinhilber, mother of two Junior members, and ARTIST! If any of you saw our exhibit at the Lions' Flower Show you saw the beautiful rendition of a Skunk Cabbage she did for us, and I hope you'll be able to see more in the future...Incedentally, did you identify the things in the picture correctly?..Robin, Wood Thrush, Red Maple, Pussy Willow, Skunk Cabbage...)

THE THAMES SCIENCE CENTER , INC.

The Thames Science Center is a non - profit organization , incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut, which provides for the youth of this area a place where they may , under the guidance of adult leaders , develop a deeper respect for the great outdoors. Here they can learn more about the world of Nature that surrounds them, and with this knowledge gain an awareness of the increasing need for conservation of our natural resources.

A major part of the Center"s income is derived from memberships, the money from which helps to provide the many and varied programs offered during the year. If you have been receiving NATURE NOTES as a complimentary mailing, won't you consider investing in a membership ?

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